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ABSTRACT

The Special Education Training and Resource Center (SETRC) program was developed in 1979-80 to design, provide, and coordinate specialized staff and parent training to ensure that handicapped students in New York City Schools receive appropriate and meaningful education in accordance with public policy. An evaluation of the program in the 1981-82 school year showed that, as in the past, the program performed competently and efficiently. Tasks undertaken included: preparing a substantial quantity of training materials; maintaining accurate records of extensive and diversified activities; writing detailed reports; conducting surveys; and providing a wide variety of parent and teacher workshops, intensive training, and inservice courses. In addition, the 1981-82 program addressed, for the first time, issues in teaching bilingual/bicultural handicapped children. The SETRC program was judged effective in designing and executing the various forms of staff training needed to ensure the appropriate education of all handicapped children. The program was well perceived by the participants, and further funding was recommended. (AOS)

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O.E.E. EVALUATION REPORT
January, 1983

E.H.A., PART B

SETRC BASIC

TRAINING PROGRAM

1981-82

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A SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION OF THE 1981-82 E.H.A., PART B SETRC BASIC TRAINING PROGRAM

The Special Education Training and Resource Center (SETRC) program was developed in 1979-80 to design, provide, and coordinate specialized staff and parent training to ensure that handicapped students receive appropriate and meaningful education in accordance with public policy. As in the past, the program performed competently and efficiently during the 1981-82 school year, despite the complexity and heterogeneity of the tasks undertaken. These included preparing a substantial quantity of training materials, maintaining accurate records of extensive and diversified activities, writing detailed reports, conducting surveys, and providing a wide variety of workshops, intensive training, and inservice courses.

The 1981-82 program continued to provide basic skills and attitude training for special, regular, and vocational education teachers as well as for teachers of bilingual students, administrators, paraprofessionals, and parents of handicapped children. SETRC also again collected and disseminated information to the many groups in its constituency, a monumental task which could not be completely discharged with the resources at its disposal; it was not possible to meet the recommendation made by SETRC staff in 1980-81 for a small computer to extend the project's mailing capability. In addition, the program staff assisted the State Education Department in conducting workshops on the state regulations for the education of handicapped children; SETRC staff presented local judicial decisions that superseded state regulations and also the resulting modifications in local applications.

As in past cycles, SETRC was particularly effective in designing and executing the various forms of training needed to ensure the appropriate education of handicapped children. The program emphasized intensive training and provided full-semester courses, ongoing programs, workshop series, and all-day workshops; requests for training were fully met. As before, the perception of the training by participants was highly positive.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The public policy that handicapped persons shall have broad opportunities to participate in all facets of our society, including their right to a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment, has been well established by judicial decisions and state and federal legislation, notably the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142). In addition, this act affirmed that the rights to an assessment of learning needs and the development of an individual learning plan are fundamental to education for handicapped children.

In 1979-80 the Division of Special Education (D.S.E.) of the New York City Public Schools and the New York State Education Department (S.E.D.) recognized that specialized staff training was essential to ensure appropriate and meaningful education for handicapped students in accordance with Public Law 94-142. Furthermore, they saw that such training must cast a wide net in order to promote the broad opportunities established by public policy; it would need to be directed toward such diverse groups as special and regular education teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, and parents of handicapped children. Finally, it must cover information on handicapping conditions, effective teaching methods, and the development of appropriate attitudes toward the handicapped. To meet these needs, D.S.E. designated the Special Education Training and Resource Center (SETRC) as its training unit.

In 1981-82 SETRC continued to address these and other needs. Once again, the program emphasized basic training to enable teachers in regular classes to accept and effectively teach mainstreamed handicapped children.

Occupational and vocational education, with their often decisive influence on eventual job placement, continued to be of particular concern. Effective teaching of handicapped bilingual and bicultural children was included for the first time in 1981-82; training focused on multicultural education and language development of bilingual children.

In 1981-82 SETRC addressed by the continuing demand for information on education of the handicapped prompted by recent legislation. Specific information on the state regulations for the education of handicapped children was required as well as clarification on the local application of New York City judicial decisions which superseded some state regulations.

The diversity of audiences and course content called for flexibility and variety in the training formats. Consequently, as in past years, SETRC used inservice courses, ongoing programs, workshops, and other strategies developed in response to local demand.

SETRC headquarters were in Manhattan and there were branch offices and training programs in all five boroughs of New York City, including a separate, decentralized unit in the Bronx. Branches were open to the public and provided a variety of services, including libraries from which teachers and parents could borrow special education instructional kits and books. Many of the materials in the libraries were prohibitively expensive for a single family or classroom and would not have been available without SETRC.

For the 1981-82 school year, SETRC received approximately one million dollars in local tax-levy funds which was supplemented by various federal and state grants, including $292,500 under Part B of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (E.H.A., Part B), to support the training program

described in this report. Training programs funded through E.H.A., Part B took place in schools and social-service agencies throughout New York City. Funded staff were six full-time training specialists, a paraprofessional, and part-time aides whose work was supplemented by the entire SETRC staff of 40, including the director, teachers, paraprofessionals, and others. The E.H.A., Part B funds also paid for travel and other expenses incurred in preparing and mailing some of the materials.

The remainder of this report presents the evaluation findings and conclusions and recommendations.

II. EVALUATION FINDINGS

PROCEDURES

For the 1981-82 school year the program proposed six objectives and criteria for their attainment. The primary method of evaluation was a discrepancy analysis; that is, the proposed activities and criteria were compared to actual accomplishments. Data for these analyses were obtained through reports and independent tabulations of program records, interviews with the program director and staff by a consultant from the Office of Educational Evaluation (O.E.E.), and a review of training documents such as detailed course syllabi and teaching modules. The O.E.E. consultant also attended training sessions, examined training materials, and tabulated random samples of participant evaluation forms.

EVALUATION

In this section, the proposed activities and criteria for each objective are presented along with a description of the actual activities and levels of attainment accomplished. The order of presentation of the findings reflects the scope and organization of the program. Due to program modification the numerical designation of objectives is not sequential. However, the objective numbers correspond to those in the proposal.

> Objective 2.0. To provide intensive training to regular classroom teachers to prepare them to educate handicapped students in the least restrictive environment. A total of 600 hours of training will be provided in 30-hour blocks.

Project ACCEPT, an acronym for "All Children Can be Educated with Pro-

per Teaching", was the title of the inservice course which trained teachers in mainstreaming by introducing effective strategies for educating handicapped students in regular education classes. Course leaders, who were selected from the New York City Public Schools, attended monthly preparation meetings and were provided with a detailed syllabus, including discussion guides and proposed activities, a bibliography, and an outline of course requirements. Topics presented included Public Law 94-142, assessment and remediation of children with learning disabilities, peer tutoring, individualizing instruction through learning centers, and behavior management and modification.

Twenty full-semester courses were proposed for 1981-82, but in order to meet enrollment demands SETRC conducted a total of 50, 28 in the fall and 22 in the spring. Total enrollment for both semesters was 978; of these 474 were regular education teachers. Other participants were regular education administrators, guidance counselors, librarians, and speech, reading, and bilingual teachers all of whom also have a role in the education of mainstreamed handicapped children. In comparison, in 1980-81 the program gave 30 full-semester courses for a total of 481 participants.

At the end of each course the participants completed evaluation forms on which they ranked, from one to five, how "organized," "interesting," "clear," "valuable," "informative", and "enjoyable" they found the course. Analysis of a random sample of 100 evaluations indicated that most participants rated the courses favorably; depending on the category, 93 to 72 percent gave one of the two highest ranks, and 71 to 41 percent gave the highest rank.

In addition to Project ACCEPT, SETRC offered eight full-semester in-service courses on math instruction and assessment of children with learning disabilities; 70 regular teachers attended. Another course specifically for regular education teachers was an intensive year-long program on adapting instruction and materials to the needs of quadriplegic children; the program provided a total of 63 hours of training to three teachers, a paraprofessional, and a guidance counselor. Finally, SETRC offered shorter workshops and workshop series, some on mainstreaming and others on teaching methods. A total of 1,194 regular teachers participated in 77 such workshops on educating handicapped children in the least restrictive environment.

The data presented above showed that the actual level of activity surpassed that proposed; accordingly, this objective was attained.

Objective 1.0. To provide at least 100 regular occupational and vocational teachers with intensive training on the education of handicapped children in the least restrictive environment. Three hundred hours will be provided in 15 and/or 30-hour blocks, or 50 hours will be provided in less than 15 hour blocks.

In preparation for these courses SETRC obtained permission from district superintendents to establish course sections in their vocational high schools, enlisted the cooperation of principals, and arranged to grant in-service or college credits to participants. Instructors, who were recruited from vocational high schools, met with the SETRC staff for monthly training sessions at which they received training materials including activity sheets, materials to be xeroxed and distributed, and a reading list. Each course began with a needs assessment to determine participants' teaching assignments, characteristics of their students, and previous experience with

mainstreaming. The results of these needs assessments served as a guide for instructors and as a resource for participants. The course covered topics such as barriers to the implementation of mainstreaming in an occupational or vocational setting; strategies to promote effective mainstreaming; legislation and judicial decisions governing the education of the handicapped; effective techinques for teaching handicapped students; and formal and informal assessment procedures.

The full objective called for ten, 30-hour inservice courses and an enrollment of at least 100 vocational and occupational teachers. The quota of five sections met in the fall, but only four took place in the spring. One section was cancelled because of budgetary constraints which increased the minimum enrollment from ten to 15. Nonetheless, the goal of providing intensive training to at least 100 vocational and occupational teachers was exceeded; total enrollment was 197, 110 in the fall and 87 in the spring. Of these, 186 participants were occupational and vocational teachers. Enrollment for the 1981-82 sessions was more than three times the previous year's, reflecting the program's expanded recruitment efforts.

Again, participants completed five-point evaluation forms at the end of the course. The 39 forms that were analyzed indicated generally favorable responses; depending on the category, 61 to 100 percent of the respondents gave one of the two highest ratings, and 70 to 78 percent gave the highest.

The above data indicate that the number of regular vocational and occupational teachers who were trained exceeded the goal even though the total number of hours fell somewhat short. Accordingly, the objective was attained.

Objective 10. To provide training and information to teachers who work with handicapped children whose proficiency in English is limited (L.E.P.). Two hundred-forty hours will be provided in 15-hour courses.

In 1981-82 SETRC initiated a one-semester course, entitled "The Culturally Diverse Exceptional Child," for special education teachers who work with bilingual or bicultural students. Course leaders were given a detailed syllabus and an extensive bibliography and attended monthly preparation meetings where they received materials for each session.

The course included instruction on understanding the behavior of children from diverse cultural backgrounds, nonbiased assessment, and the development of attitudes and skills that are necessary for successful multicultural education. An important component of the course was language development which emphasized both language assessment and the sequencing of language objectives for handicapped L.E.P. children.

The original objective called for 240 hours of training in 15-hour courses with another 200 hours of follow-up training. Since the number of SETRC staff was small relative to workload, the S.E.D. associate for the training of special educators approved the deletion of follow-up training. In response to enrollment demand, SETRC conducted 11 full-semester courses, four in the fall and seven in the spring, for 270 special education teachers; this represented 330 rather than the proposed 240 hours. The program provided an additional 60 hours of training in the form of a mandated inservice course for new special education teachers' of bilingual handicapped children. There were also extra-curricular consultations and workshops on bilingual and bicultural topics.

Analysis of a random sample of course evaluation forms again indicated that overall the participants valued the training, with the ratings for the spring semester somewhat more favorable than for the fall. Because the fall and spring evaluation forms were different, separate random samples were taken; 75 forms were tabulated, 28 percent of the total for both semesters. On the 25 fall forms, 44 to 88 percent of the participants gave the course one of the two highest ratings in categories of "organization," "met needs," "stimulation," "introduction of materials," "new approaches to existing materials," "group involvement," "value of information," and "classroom usefulness of information". The 50 spring evaluations expressed stronger approval; 86 to 100 percent of the participants agreed, or strongly agreed, with the following items: "subject content was helpful," "goals and objectives were achieved," " would recommend the course to colleagues," "materials were useful," "course leader was knowledeable," "helped clarify issues," and "format was effective."

In summary, the program provided 390 hours of intensive training to special education teachers of students with limited mastery of English as well as extra-curricular hours provided in workshops and consultations. Accordingly, the objective was attained.

Objective 4.0. To provide a total of 200 hours of inservice workshop training to a minimum of 1,200 parents of handicapped children.

In preparation for this objective two SETRC staff members attended training sessions in Albany, mailed announcements to appropriate groups such as education personnel and parent associations in each school, and prepared additional workshop materials to supplement those previously

developed. Workshops covered parents' rights and the law; the parents' role in the individualized education plan and the planning conference; helping children at home with school subjects; managing children's behavior; communication with their children's school; and the use of daily activities to develop skills. For all topics handouts reinforced the training.

The objective called for 200 hours of training for 1,200 parents and 278 hours for 1,477 parents were actually conducted; as in 1980-81, the objective was achieved. According to their completed evaluation forms parents found the workshops valuable; on a random sample of 100 forms 80 parents gave the presentation a rating of "excellent," and 19 gave it a rating of "good."

Besides workshops the objective also specified that at least 100 parents receive assistance on a one-to-one or small-group basis; the staff furnished consultations to 152 parents. The needs of parents governed the durations of specific consultations which lasted from a half-hour to nearly two hours. A total of 83.5 hours were provided.

Both activities designated for parents of handicapped children exceeded the proposed levels. Accordingly, the objective was attained.

Objective 6.0. To disseminate information related to the education of handicapped children in an effective and efficient manner to all appropriate constituents in the service area.

The program carried out several activities in fulfillment of Objective 6. First, SETRC assisted the S.E.D. Bureau of Program Development in conducting two-day workshops for the D.S.E. and for each of the 32 local school districts on the state commissioner's regulations for the education of handicapped children (Part 200 Regulations). S.E.D. staff described and explained the Part 200 Regulations and SETRC trainers presented New York City judicial

decisions which superseded the state regulations and the resulting modifications in local application. Over a two-month period a total of 1,701 Board of Education personnel received training; these included Committees on the Handicapped and school based support teams chairs and members (1,453), special education supervisors (197), regular education administrators (34), placement officers (6), and parent outreach workers (11). SETRC also conducted its own workshops on the Part 200 Regulations for other groups, including private school administrators; this additional training was not conducted jointly with the state.

As the second major activity for this objective, SETRC proposed to review and analyze current methods of disseminating information, design more effective procedures, and update the list of recipients. As reported in the 1980-81 evaluation, the SETRC staff concluded that computerized mailing was essential for effective distribution of information and recommended that a small computer be used for the next program cycle. However, resources for dissemination were sharply curtailed for 1981-82 which not only precluded the purchase of a computer but also reduced existing staff. To meet the demand for circulating a large volume of materials, the program supplemented use of the mail in a number of ways: staff trainers circulated materials, bulky items were stored in SETRC branch libraries, and Board of Education messenger routes were used.

SETRC alo conducted two impact surveys. One was an informal poll of constituents to determine if they were receiving information and, if so, whether it was appropriate for their needs. Since the results were intended for internal use in modifying dissemination strategies, a written report was

not prepared. The staff conducted the survey by making periodic telephone inquiries to recipients on SETRC's dissemination lists.

A second survey took the form of a questionnaire mailed to public school teachers who attended a workshop at the City University of New York (CUNY) in spring, 1981. The workshop introduced special curricula developed by CUNY staff to increase the sensitivity of regular class students to the needs and feelings of people with disabilities; curricula were designed for incorporation into existing programs in science, health, English, and social studies. The questionnaire asked whether teachers had adopted, or planned to adopt, any of the curricula during the 1981-82 school year. Seventy questionnaires were sent; SETRC received 40 replies and forwarded the results to Albany.

In summary a number of diverse activities were proposed for Objective 6. Not having access to a small computer hampered the effective dissemination of information; nonetheless the program distributed a large quantity of information. All other activities were fully implemented. Accordingly, the objective was largely attained.

Objective 7.0. To develop local training strategies and to conduct training based on the results of a current functional needs assessment.

The intent of this objective was to develop and provide training to meet specific local needs. Training was to include both full-semester courses and workshops and was to address predetermined needs as well as those that became apparent during the current school year. Some activities offered were specifically requested by school or D.S.E. officials and included mandated courses for new special education teachers to fulfill contrac-

tual agreements between the Board of Education and the United Federation of Teachers, elective inservice courses for regular and special education teachers, and training for designated target groups such as parent outreach workers. Workshops were also proposed on predetermined topics including: data-based instruction, a system which emphasizes continual assessment and specific objectives for each student; the learning center approach, or the use of activity areas for grouping students for individualized instruction; and language development with emphasis on assessment and intervention strategies.

Meetings with high school supervisors, special education regional coordinators, special education supervisors, and coordinators of special projects such as the Title I reading program and the reimbursable Instructional Management Program (Project IMP) generated additional plans for training. Elementary, intermediate, and high school principals and other local administrators also requested training sessions. Finally, orientations describing SETRC materials and services, pamphlets, and previously conducted workshops led to still other requests. Training to meet the variety of needs took many forms and included full-semester courses, ongoing programs, workshops, and workshop series.

The following sections present descriptions and evaluation findings for the inservice courses, workshops, and consultations conducted to meet local needs.

Inservice Courses

Courses mandated for recently hired special education teachers, in compliance with a contractual agreement with the United Federation of Teachers,

had separate sections to meet the particular requirements of secondary-school, resource room, and speech and language teachers. SETRC staff prepared a detailed syllabus for each section. In the fall 38 sections had 834 participants, and in the spring 40 sections had 1,003 participants; enrollment increased by about 500 from the previous year. (A few additional courses were conducted by the Bronx Special Education Region using course materials provided by SETRC).

Analysis of a random sample of 100 evaluation forms from each semester for the mandated courses indicated that participants felt the training was of high quality. In the fall, 85 to 95 percent of the participants rated the courses either "excellent" or "good" in "organization," "meeting needs," "stimulation," "relevant materials," "new approaches to materials," "group involvement," "value of information," and "classroom usefulness of information." Over 90 percent rated the course leader as "good" or "excellent" in the categories of "knowledge" and "overall excellence," and 88 percent gave the leader one of the two highest ratings for "helping solve specific problems." In the spring, 85 to 95 percent of the participants agreed with the following items: "course content was helpful;" "met goals and objectives;" "materials were useful;" "course leader was knowledgeable;" "clarified issues;" and "the format was effective;" 75 percent indicated they "would recommend the course to colleagues."

SETRC also provided elective courses during 1981-82, 15 in the fall and 18 in the spring; total enrollment for these was 599. Full-semester courses included mathematics for the special child, implementing career education with special education students, and corrective and remedial instruction in reading for students with special needs. In addition, 29 teachers attended

two half-semester courses on a new method of teaching speech. In comparison, the 20 elective courses offered in 1980-81 had a total enrollment of 384.

Workshops and Consultations

In addition to the regular courses held during 1981-82, SETRC conducted 2,744 training sessions for a total of 11,224 participants. Most of these (9,215) attended single-session workshops in groups of 20 to 25. Other workshop training was ongoing throughout the year. In this format the program conducted 2,069 sessions for 347 participants, each of whom attended approximately six sessions; 1,590 of these were for data-based instruction. Workshop series, another form of intensive training, had a specific number of sessions determined by workshop content; 940 education personnel received training in 212 such sessions. Finally, 722 participants attended 19 all-day workshops in groups of about 40.

In comparison to the previous cycle the number of workshop sessions increased but the total number of participants declined. Total sessions increased from 594 to 2,744 and total participants declined from about 19,000 to about 11,000, reflecting some shift to smaller groups and to series rather than single sessions.

SETRC also provided 412 consultations to 636 educators and 35 orientations on SETRC materials and services to 513 participants. In 1980-81 the program conducted 468 consultations and 68 orientations.

The tabulated results of a random sample of 300 evaluation forms showed that over 95 percent of the participants gave the training sessions an overall rating of "excellent" or "good," 98 percent rated the presentation as "excellent" or "good", and 96 percent perceived the materials as "excellent" or "good."

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As in past cycles, the E.H.A., Part B SETRC Training Program performed competently and efficiently during the 1981-82 school year, despite the complexity and heterogeneity of the tasks undertaken. These included preparing a vast quantity of training materials, maintaining accurate records of extensive and diversified activities, and writing detailed reports. The program also collected and disseminated information to the many groups in its constituency and cooperated with the S.E.D. in publicizing the state commissioner's regulations on the education of the handicapped. Although SETRC was able to distribute considerable information, the task was monumental and limited resources prevented the full implementation of the objective.

Once again, SETRC was particularly effective in designing and executing the various forms of training needed to ensure the appropriate education of handicapped children. Requests for training were continual and a great deal was undertaken. The program emphasized intensive training by offering full-semester courses, ongoing programs, workshop series, and all-day workshops. As in the past, the perception of the training by participants was highly positive.

Except for being hindered somewhat by insufficient resources for disseminating information, SETRC accomplished or surpassed the six objectives that were established for the program: it provided 50 instead of 20 full-semester courses for regular teachers on the education of handicapped children; 197 as opposed to 100 occupational and vocational teachers received training in nine instead of ten full-semester courses; special education

teachers of bilingual and bicultural children received 390 rather than 240 hours of training; the program provided 278 instead of 200 hours of workshop training to 1,477 instead of 1,200 parents of handicapped children; and it responded fully to the demand for training to meet local needs. For all activities which were proposed for both the 1980-81 and 1981-82 cycles, the program accomplished more during the second cycle, largely in response to increased local demand; every objective was attained and most were exceeded. Consequently, it is recommended that such a training program be continued. The large enrollment, favorable participant responses, and continuing requests for training during the current year all bolster this recommendation.